



BOSSES PUT WORKERS IN DANGER

NHS STAFF CALL DAY OF ACTION >>PAGE 20 • CARE AND CARE HOMES INDUSTRY BROKEN >>PAGE 7
UNOFFICIAL STRIKES IN ROYAL MAIL, ACTION ON BINS AND ANGRY BUS DRIVERS >>PAGES 4&5

Socialist Worker

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JOHNSON, RAAB, HANCOCK TORIES LIE THOUSANDS DIE **LIED** about virus testing **LIED** about workers' PPE **LIED** about care homes

TORY LIES over the coronavirus crisis mean many more people will die. And we are not all in it together—poor, black and vulnerable people will be the hardest hit.

Throughout the crisis, the Tories have wheeled out lie after lie to cover up their crimes. They set out by downplaying the scale of the problem.

In late February, the Tories were advised that half a million people in Britain could die from the virus. Dominic Cummings, Johnson's adviser, reportedly brushed off the threat.

In public, they talk of protecting people and the NHS. In reality they fought to protect "business as usual" and bosses' profits.



>>Page 5

The Tories delayed lockdown measures such as closing schools.

In early March Boris Johnson said Britain was "very, very well prepared".

"We have a fantastic NHS, fantastic testing systems and fantastic surveillance of the spread of disease," he said.

It was rubbish. The NHS was not prepared for the outbreak. It was already at breaking point following a decade of Tory cuts and privatisation.

There are no "fantastic testing systems". Unless you're the daughter of a minister, the prime minister or a royal it's hard to get a test.

Early in the crisis, worried people stocked



THE FUNERAL of Covid-19 victim Ismail Mohamed Abdulwahab

HEARTLESS—MATT HANCOCK

LABOUR

How party's right helped sabotage Corbyn leadership

A REPORT detailing the extent of the efforts to sabotage Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party has been leaked.

The document claims that a faction centred around former general secretary Iain McNicol "were bitterly opposed to the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn".

>>Page 6

STATE POWER



New laws can be used against resistance

AS THE coronavirus crisis deepens, states will be looking to extend their power.

We are already seeing fines for breaking quarantine rules as well as heightened police repression.

These measures are not in the interest of workers.

>>Pages 10&11

PANDEMIC

Factory farming and loss of wild areas to blame

PANDEMICS aren't "accidents of nature" but result from harmful capitalist practices that put profit before everything.

Intensive farming and expanding cities mean that we are coming into closer contact with animals—and their diseases.

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THE THINGS THEY SAY

'The health of Boris Johnson is the health of the body politic and, by extension, the health of the nation'

Allison Pearson in the Daily Telegraph

'Coronavirus simulation shows a single cough can spread germs across two supermarket aisles'

The Daily Mail resurrects an old enemy

'Lapdogs in the Western media'

Nigel Farage is angry that blaming China for coronavirus is called out as racist

'We need everyone to treat PPE like the precious resource that it is. That means only using it when there's a clinical need, and not using more than is needed'

Health Secretary Matt Hancock blames health workers for using the equipment his government is failing to provide

Asos and adviser say there is nothing to do but work

WORKERS CAN'T "hide" from the coronavirus forever, a government adviser has said. Rupert Shute is the deputy scientific adviser at the Home Office.

He made the comments during an online discussion with the Passport Office, where workers are being made to return to work.

According to Shute, workers shouldn't be angry about going back to work as they are likely to catch the virus anyway.

"You are no more at risk at the workplace as you would be in your home or at the supermarket," Shute said. "We are working on the assessment that 80 percent of us, if we haven't already, will get the virus."

"We cannot hide away from it forever."

The Tories have said people



ASOS IN Barnsley

should work from home where possible to minimise the spread of Covid-19. But it turns out that, if it's better for business for us to go out to work, that's what they will pressure us to do.

● THE ASOS clothing firm is throwing workers on the dole despite them putting themselves at risk by continuing to work.

Bosses have told some 70

workers—50 drivers and 20 admin staff—that their jobs will end on 30 April. "We're being chucked on the scrap heap, facing the abyss, mid-pandemic," said one driver.

Another said, "You feel like things can't get any worse—but they just did. Everything is crashing down.

"I live with vulnerable people and a young child. Every day I go to work I put myself and them at risk. Half

the time it's just to deliver something somebody doesn't really need—giving our lives for a £5.99 bikini.

"We have no masks and it's hard to socially distance. But I have to work because we need the money."

He added that it was "unbelievable" his reward for doing this was losing his job.

Asos is now switching its delivery contract from Menzies to DPD and Hermes.

This means workers will switch from being employees to being self-employed.

The firm claims that Tupe laws, which are supposed to protect workers' conditions in such situations, don't apply.

The news follows a strike at Asos's Barnsley warehouse last month, where more than 98 percent of workers said they felt unsafe in a survey.

Tax breaks for the rich...

TESCO HAS grabbed a £585 million tax break from the government as part of a business rate holiday during the coronavirus crisis. Helpfully, this made it easier for the firm to pay £900 million in dividends to investors.

Tesco boss Dave Lewis defended the payouts saying, "We have a strong balance sheet and we do not need surplus cash."

...and handouts for the Masons

ANOTHER potential beneficiary of Tory generosity is the Masonic Charitable Foundation, the Freemasons' national charity. It will get to dip into a £750 million pot to keep charities going during the coronavirus crisis.

Foundation boss David Innes said that many charities had seen "donations plunge right at the time their services are most needed".

Apparently if you are vulnerable, you can call on your local friendly Freemason for support, such as doing shopping or collecting medication.

They have so much cash—"an initial fund of over £1 million"—that they don't anticipate having to draw on the government fund.

Hypocrite MP's own goal

TORY MP Julian Knight, chair of the digital, culture, media and sport committee of MPs, is outraged at footballers.

He called for players to agree to wage cuts,



Julian Knight

decrying football's "moral vacuum".

Knight is also the author of a 2004 book *Wills, Probate and Inheritance Tax for Dummies*, which advises people on how to avoid paying taxes.

Advice for hiding money from the "prowling tax collector" includes "fleeing the country" to avoid inheritance tax.

Police tell man he can't be in his own garden

POLICE IN Rotherham, south Yorkshire, told a man he wasn't allowed in his own garden due to coronavirus.

Daniel Connell was playing with his kids in the Eastwood area of the town. He videoed an officer telling him he had to "stay indoors because of Covid-19".

"The virus does not stop on your front garden," the officer continued. "You cannot come on your front garden." South Yorkshire Police later apologised.

Elsewhere, the Northamptonshire police chief Nick Adderley has threatened to have



officers searching shopping trolleys for "non-essential" items. Adderley also said his force were just "days away" from bringing in roadblocks.

Home secretary Priti Patel was forced to clarify that such measures are "not appropriate".

● THE COPS' Police Federation has complained that the provision of personal protective equipment for officers is "mixed".

Maybe if officers didn't harass people so much and kept their social distance they would be safer.

One rule for us but another for minister

TORY housing secretary Robert Jenrick travelled 150 miles from London to visit his Grade I listed £1.1 million second home mansion in Herefordshire last week.

The trip came days after Jenrick urged people to "stay at home". Then again he didn't say which home.

Jenrick also has a £2.5 million townhouse in London and rents a £2,000 a month property in his constituency in Nottinghamshire—which we pay for.

He obviously has the added confusion of so many homes that the vast majority of us don't suffer from.

But Jenrick also paid a visit to his parents in Shropshire.

So maybe he just likes telling us to follow the rules while he does what he likes.

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Move to restart economy is driven by state's rivalry

GLOBAL DEATHS from the coronavirus surpassed 100,000 at the end of last week. In many countries there is no let-up in the grim statistics of infection and deaths.

Yet already governments across the world are anxious to force through a return to work so that profit-making can begin again.

The Tories are torn between wanting to end the lockdown and their fear that if the virus death rate rose sharply it could harm them politically.

When the lockdown started Boris Johnson pledged to have a review after three weeks. This deadline passed on Monday.

Ministers that want to ease the lockdown are themselves split on whether measures should be relaxed at the start of May when the next review is due, or whether to delay until the end of that month.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak is said to be among those pushing for an early easing of restrictions.

The government is reported to be considering a sector by sector end to the lockdown.

Competitors

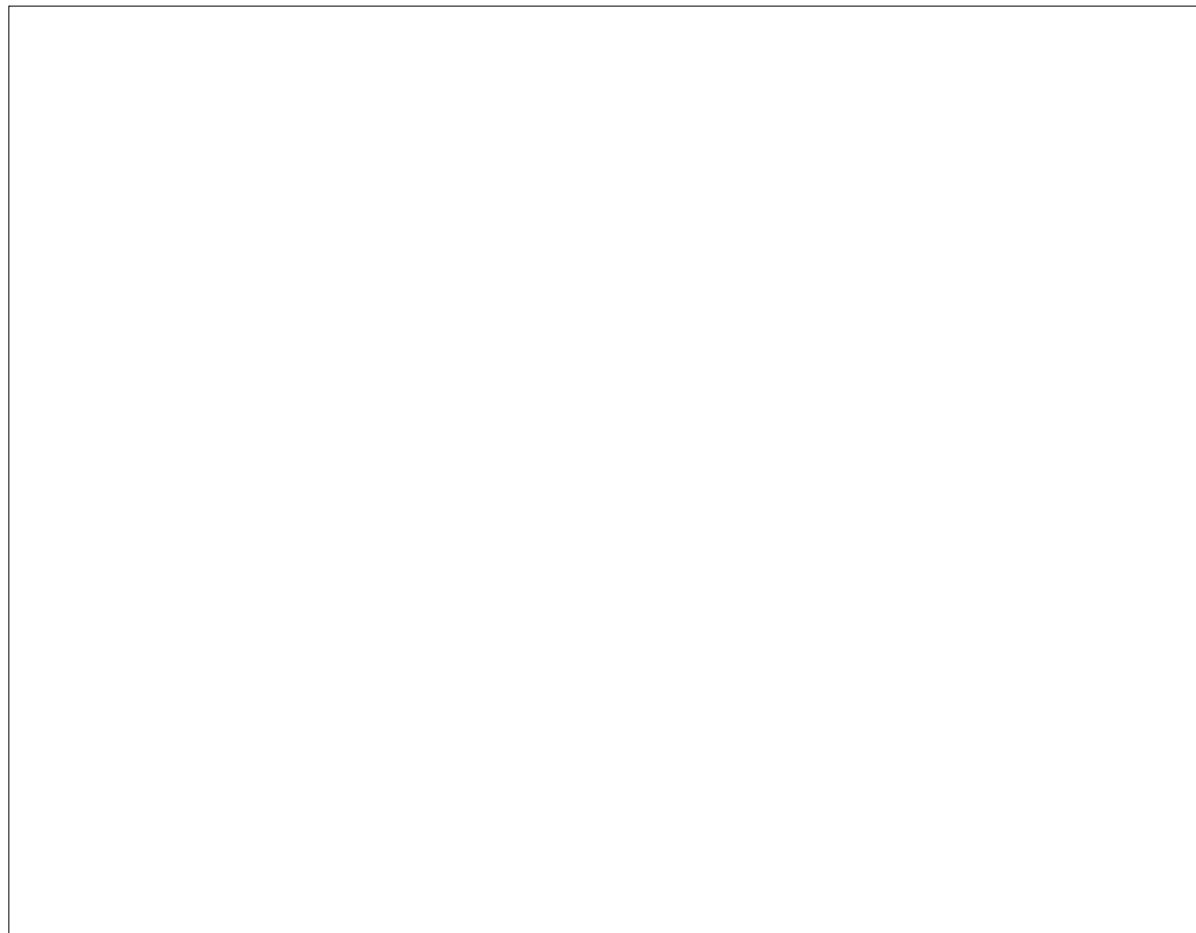
Transport workers could be one of the first groups to be sent back as part of a drive to "get the economy moving again" that could also see schools re-opened.

The Tories will not want to see international competitors lifting their lockdowns while Britain continues with its constraints.

In Spain restrictions were to be eased on over 3 million "key workers" this week.

The supposed "left" government of the Socialist party and the once-radical Podemos is gambling with workers' lives.

Hundreds are still dying every day in a country that has the highest rate of deaths per one million of the population of anywhere in the world.



DESPISE THE dangers, people in Spain are being forced back into work

The number of deaths from the virus rose sharply from 510 on Saturday to 619 on Sunday.

Yet whole sections of the economy are now said to be "safe". Swathes of industrial and construction sites are having restrictions on working lifted.

In addition petrol stations, tobacconists, pet food shops, e-commerce operations and dry cleaners will be allowed to operate.

In Italy, one of the hardest hit countries, prime Minister Giuseppe

Conte says Italy, "can't wait for the virus to disappear completely" before restarting the economy.

He has announced that after talks with Italy's unions, that some businesses would start reopening soon.

A return to work while death tolls are still rising could lead to a "deadly resurgence" of the virus, according to the World Health Organisation.

But despite this profits are at the forefront of the minds of the ruling elite. This attitude was exemplified by

Mervyn King, who was the governor of the Bank of England during the 2008 financial crash.

He said "I think that given that a vaccine is a long way away, an exit strategy is going to be a process of trial and error."

Workers must not be forced to go back to work. And "trial and error" will result in many more deaths.

Union leaders must be pushed not to agree any such return to work until it is genuinely safe.

Iran risks 'second wave'

IRANIAN PRESIDENT Hassan Rouhani relaxed social distancing rules last week.

He urged businesses considered to be "low risk" to reopen.

Most companies in the capital Tehran are not due to reopen formally until 18 April, but travel has already intensified, leading to a build-up of traffic.

Figures released on Sunday showed that 117 people had died from Covid-19 in the previous 24 hours.

The number of newly infected people was 1,657. This is down from

the figure of 2,875 some eleven days ago but remains high.

Iran's senior medical

organisation expressed concern

that the relaxation

"was being introduced without considering the scientific and executive justifications for the project, or the threat that the past efforts of all people, officials and medical staff will be wasted".

Reopening businesses that are now closed might lead to a "second wave of coronavirus" said the chair of Tehran city council.



President Rouhani

Mass graves in United States

By SOPHIE SQUIRE

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump last week said that he wants to kickstart the economy with a "big bang".

Members of his administration claim Trump is seeking to reopen much of the economy as soon as 1 May.

Dr Anthony Fauci, the president's public health adviser, told the media, "When one starts to relax some of those restrictions, we know that there will be people getting infected."

Echoing Trump's statement, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said, "We can't stay home and just wait for the vaccine to arrive."

Trump said the US is currently behind initial predictions of a death toll of between 100,000 and 240,000 and as was "ahead of schedule".

Trump's push for workplaces to re-open risks

Mass graves in the New York

the lives of ordinary people and puts the interests of the bosses first.

Meanwhile, the horror continues for ordinary people.

Images have emerged of coffins being buried in unmarked mass graves in New York—the epicentre of Covid-19 deaths in the US.

New York state now has more coronavirus cases than any single country.

Workers in hazmat outfits are stacking wooden coffins in deep trenches on Hart Island.

Officials say burials are being ramped up at site, which has long been used for people with no next of kin or families who cannot afford a funeral.

Normally, about 25 bodies a week are interred on the island.

"Now burial operations have increased from one day a week to five days a week, with around 24 burials each day," said Department of Corrections spokesman Jason Kersten.

Prisoners from Rikers Island, the city's main jail, usually dig the graves, but the rising workload has recently been taken over by contractors.

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Royal Mail stoppages over virus health and safety fears

by NICK CLARK

MORE POSTAL workers have taken action due to fears over coronavirus safety in their Royal Mail workplaces.

Workers at two Oxfordshire delivery offices took a stand in the past week after colleagues were found to have contracted the virus.

In the East Oxford delivery office postal workers refused to work inside their building on Saturday. Bosses had to take the post outside of the office before workers would handle it.

The CWU union's South Central postal branch said this was "due to concerns about a suspected Covid-19 case being very closely linked to the office."

The branch said, "The members stood up for their rights not to work in what they deemed to be an unsafe and dangerous workplace, putting themselves and their families at risk."

It added, "An intense clean is taking place and will be completed for members to enter a safe workplace by Tuesday morning."

The action followed a similar dispute at a delivery office in Didcot, Oxfordshire, on Wednesday.

Workers left the workplace after a colleague was found to have had the virus. Bosses contracted a cleaning company to keep clean his van. But they cleaned the office less thoroughly, and workers refused to go back in, fearing it was unsafe.

Disgracefully, bosses are treating the action as an unofficial strike—meaning the workers could lose their pay.

Actions

The two incidents in Oxford are the latest in a series of actions taken by CWU members in workplaces around Britain.

Workers in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, walked out on Thursday of last week, forcing managers to agree to staggered start times to make their delivery office less busy.

Parcelforce workers in Swansea also left their depot on Wednesday demanding improved health and

BACK STORY

Workers at a number of Royal Mail sites have taken action since the outbreak began

- Many complain of unsafe working conditions and a lack of protective equipment

- There have already been walkouts and stoppages in offices in Scotland, Kent and Hampshire

- The CWU union wants Royal Mail to act as an 'additional emergency service'

- But Royal Mail bosses want business as usual



A DELIVERY office before the outbreak. Workers in some offices now complain of inadequate distancing

safety measures. There were claims that when managers heard of the planned protest, one of them threatened to call police and report a social gathering. But the protest went ahead anyway.

And Royal Mail workers in Warrington, Cheshire, walked out on Tuesday of last week after a colleague contracted the virus.

Royal Mail's top management have tried to continue with "business as usual" during the coronavirus outbreak. They have since retreated on door to door junk mail deliveries, saying leaflets will now only be delivered to people already receiving letters or parcels.

Worried

But workers in many Royal Mail offices are worried and angry at a lack of personal protective equipment and inadequate social distancing.

And with an increase in packages ordered online, and some 20 percent of the Royal Mail workforce off sick or self-isolating, workload is up.

Paul Garraway, a CWU divisional rep in Oxfordshire told Socialist Worker, "We're starting to get some of the PPE, but we don't have wipes yet. You're meant to wipe down your van when you've finished with it, but you don't have the wipes to do it."

He added, "It must be terrifying having to go to work every day in some of these offices. If people don't feel safe they should remove themselves from the building."

BIN WORKERS

on the Wirral on Merseyside stopped work over coronavirus health and safety last week.

The Unite union members, who work for the outsourcer Biffa, refused to work on Tuesday of last week over bosses' "failure to take the workforce's concerns seriously".

Workers said bosses were still asking three workers to be in a lorry cab despite social distancing. Steven

Gerrard, a Unite regional officer, said, "For over a fortnight Unite has been trying to ensure that Biffa introduced measures to protect our members."

"They have failed to do so. "We have been calling for an urgent meeting to find a safe workable solution to our members' health concerns, but these calls have been ignored.

Enough

"Our members have informed us that enough is enough and they will not continue to have their health and the health of their families placed at needless risk."

He added, "Residents of the Wirral will be alarmed that their refuse workers who are playing a key worker role are being treated with such disregard. "Other councils and contractors have introduced measures to ensure

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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



We're in the fight of our lives—to save our lives

"HISTORY HAS brought mankind to that pinnacle on which the total obliteration of mankind is at last a practical possibility," wrote the radical scholar Norman O Brown.

"At this moment of history the friends of the life instinct must warn that the victory of death is by no means impossible."

Brown was writing in 1959, and identified the "victory of death" with nuclear war. Now, however, we have been reminded of what our ancestors knew all too well—that death can triumph thanks to disease.

Life against Death, the title of Brown's book, has been much in my mind these past weeks. But death isn't abstraction, or a mythical figure, as in The Seventh Seal, Ingmar Bergman's great film about the 14th century Black Death, which killed a third of Europe's population.

The death stalking the world is a class death. It has gripped some of the main financial centres of global capitalism—Milan, London, New York. But it takes the poor and the oppressed.

The figures are horrifying. Black and Latino people are twice as likely to die of Covid-19 than white people in New York.

In Chicago, African Americans make up 72 percent of those killed by the disease.

As the owner of a grocery store in New Orleans told the Washington Post newspaper, "Life in this neighbourhood is an underlying condition: hard jobs, long hours, bad pay, no health insurance, no money, bad diet."

The working poor can't work from home or find the space to isolate. Many of their jobs have evaporated in the lockdown, leaving them and their families close to starvation.

Britain still has a welfare state of sorts. But the Financial Times newspaper last Saturday quoted the Food Foundation. "Six percent of surveyed adults, the equivalent of three million people, told them that a lack of food had forced someone in their household to go without eating during the past three weeks," it said.

Pressure

And it will get worse. The pressure is building on both sides of the Atlantic from big business and right wing politicians to end the lockdowns.

This is despite the fact that, in the absence of a vaccine, relaxing the lockdowns will probably lead to waves of reinfection, and more avoidable deaths.

Fraser Nelson, editor of the right wing magazine The Spectator, put an interesting spin on it. "The deaths caused by Covid-19 are shocking," he wrote.

"But so, too, are the effects of the lockdown. 'Our message was supposed to be: keep working, but work from home if possible,' says one minister. 'But that message has got lost.'

"The Treasury expected three million claimants for its 'job retention' scheme. Nine million are now expected.

"The plan was for about one in five school pupils to stay in class—not just the children of key workers, but those regarded as vulnerable or with special needs.

"Instead, it seems, just 2 percent of pupils turned up."

So the problem isn't people ignoring social distancing and partying in the parks. On the contrary, we are being too careful of our and our families' lives.

Nelson also repeats the nauseating argument that there are "trade-offs" between saving lives through lockdown and the economic damage this will cause.

He cites strongly disputed calculations that the developing recession will cause 150,000 extra deaths.

Even the free market Economist magazine has no time for this. "Detailed research on the health effects of downturns suggests that they are not nearly so negative as you might think, especially when it comes to death," it says.

"The economic evidence indicates that mortality rises in periods of economic growth and declines during downturns."

Life against death—life against profits. Never in our lifetimes have we experienced so starkly that capitalism is a death-dealing system.

This has always been true—think of early capitalism's reliance on the slave trade and child labour.

Now this system has created the conditions for pandemics such as Covid-19 by invading the remaining wild parts of the world and is making working people pay, many with their lives.

This is the fight of our lives—the fight for our lives.

STAFFERS HOPED to oust Jeremy Corbyn (left) and make Tom Watson interim leader (right)

Labour officials plotted to sabotage Jeremy Corbyn

by NICK CLARK

A LEAKED Labour Party report has exposed how a faction lodged inside the party's headquarters sabotaged Jeremy Corbyn's leadership—and waged war on the members.

The document claims staff and officials, grouped around former general secretary Iain McNicol in the Labour HQ, "Were bitterly opposed to the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn".

seen sufficiently opposed to Corbyn.

In a number of exchanges, senior officials derided MP Diane Abbott as "a very angry woman" and "truly repulsive".

Discussing claims that Abbott had been found "crying in the loos," they agreed to tell Channel 4 journalist Michael Crick.

In another exchange Emilie Oldknow—now

assistant general secretary in the Unison union—was also dismayed and dismissive of MP Dawn Butler's complaints of racism in Labour.

Oldknow and McNicol—a former senior officer for the GMB union—also hoped that defeats in by-elections in 2016 would force Corbyn to resign. Oldknow says McNicol had told deputy leader Tom Watson—who continually

undermined Corbyn—"to prepare for being interim leader".

McNicol agreed during the 2017 general election that funding and resources should be channelled to campaigning in Watson's constituency to "protect Tom's seat".

But most telling is staffers' attitude to Labour members and supporters.

Senior officials repeatedly derided members as "Trots". This was used a catch-all term to refer to anyone who supported left wing policies.

As thousands of people attended a final Labour campaign rally in 2017, senior officials joked about cops attacking supporters with truncheons and water cannons. They also spoke explicitly of organising a "Trot hunt" in Labour's 2015 and 2016 leadership elections, in which Corbyn supporters were suspended or expelled on flimsy pretexts.

The report reveals how mistrust and hatred of ordinary party members and activists is embedded inside Labour's bureaucracy.

Members and activists join Labour hoping to bring real—even socialist—change to society.

But unelected officials work to keep tight control of a party they want to be "mainstream" and "responsible"—which means right wing.

How smears took hold

THE REPORT was intended to be submitted as evidence to an investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission into accusations that Labour is institutionally antisemitic.

It was written by staff under current general secretary Jennie Formby, but is reported to have been scrapped.

Parts of the document point to evidence that some accusations were motivated by opposition to Corbyn.

It defends Labour's attempts to defend the right to criticise Israel and support the Palestinians. Yet it also concedes that Labour had a problem with antisemitism linked to its rise in membership under Corbyn. And it complains

that the right wing faction stopped them from expelling activists who linked accusations of antisemitism to support for Israel.

The crux of the accusations were always that Corbyn's longstanding support for Palestine made the left inherently antisemitic.

Rows focused on whether it's right to describe Israel as a racist

state. Giving ground on these arguments allowed the right to paint Labour—and the left—as antisemitic, and defeat Corbyn.

Broken care industry exposed as residents and workers die

Care home residents as well as workers are dying as a result of poor safety regulations. Behind this lies the devastating impact of privatisation in the industry, says **Sarah Bates**

VULNERABLE PEOPLE in social care are left at a heightened risk of coronavirus because of the failures of local government bosses, private care providers and national government policy.

Across Britain, around 400,000 people live in residential care—and are looked after by overworked, underpaid workers. Workers are left delivering critical care, where infection is a risk every day.

Lyn-Marie O'Hara is a co-covenor of Glasgow Unison union branch. She told Socialist Worker, "Staff are up close and personal with residents day in, day out".

"You can't deliver personal care from two metres away," she said.

Many workers are struggling to find the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep them safe.

Lyn-Marie said that workers "need to know that there's endless PPE."

"What we don't want is a raft of dead people, with a legacy saying 'we could have done more'."

"I don't feel safe," care and support worker Polly Smith told Socialist Worker.

Polly is a member of the Unison union's NEC and spoke to Socialist Worker in a personal capacity.

She said workers have to rely on "rumours" to work out who has suspected coronavirus.

"They're not telling us anything," she said. "It would be better if the manager came out and said who has a temperature, and who has been coughing."

She added that cooks and cleaners are struggling to get hold of PPE, despite being asked to provide more close-contact care.

Transmission

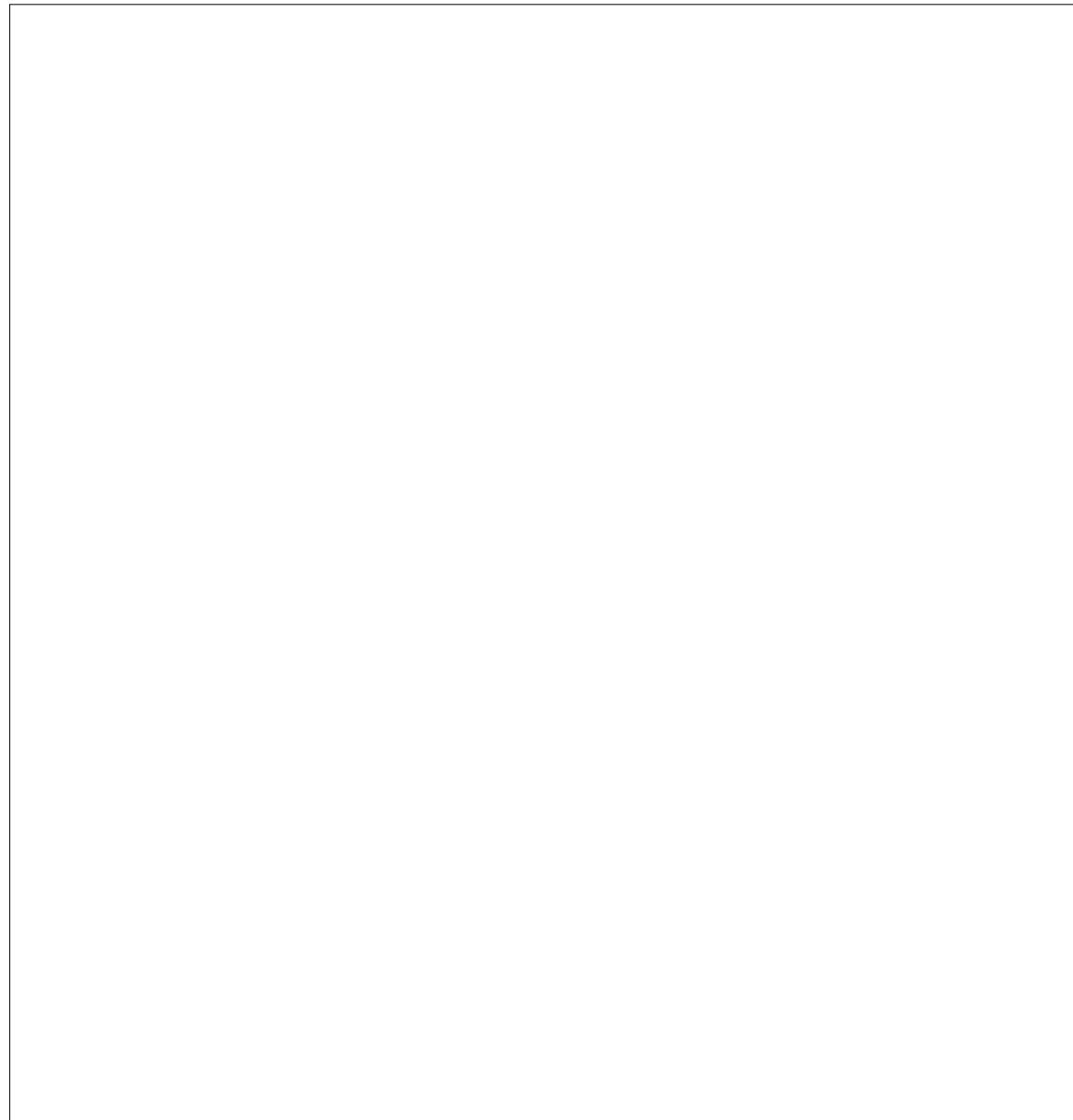
To stop the transmission of the virus, care home residents are confined to their rooms for large parts of the day—and visits from family members have been stopped.

"I can't imagine what it's like for older adults, to see people gowned up and masked up, having no visitors," said Lyn-Marie.

At Polly's workplace, residents are mostly kept in their rooms to stop the spread of infection, which she said is "really difficult for people".

Although the scale of the crisis is not yet known, Covid-19 is clearly tearing through some residential homes. In Glasgow, 16 residents at the Burlington Court Care Home died in the space of just eight days.

Seven people have died in the Hawthorn Green home in east London—with a further 21 residents



A CARE home in Glasgow where 16 people have died due to coronavirus

displaying Covid-19 symptoms.

Jamshed Ali, a resident at the home in Stepney, died after returning to Hawthorn Green following discharge from hospital for a chest infection.

Luthfa Hood, his daughter, said, "If we had known the virus was so prevalent in Hawthorn Green we would not have sent him back there after he had been in hospital."

"There needs to be more testing, especially in places like care homes where the most vulnerable live."

With many care workers forced to stop work due to them falling ill with symptoms or living with vulnerable family members, services are increasingly stretched thin.

Workers and residents need to be equipped with the required PPE and funding to keep them safe.

PRIVATISATION For profit homes mean a risk to life

THE CORONAVIRUS in care homes is exacerbated by an industry that is fragmented and highly competitive.

The Skills for Care charity said there are around 22,000 adult social care organisations at 41,000 care-providing locations across Britain.

It's an industry privatised by New Labour and the Tories, and one where private firms run care facilities for profit. When firms run into financial difficulty, companies can withdraw care—often suddenly—and the contract is passed on by the local authority to the lowest bidder.

Privatisation makes it difficult

Staff have inadequate protection

to implement national measures across the industry.

And for the outsourcing and healthcare fat cats, their primary concern is always how much profit they can pocket.

Council bosses in England have committed to paying private care providers an extra 10 percent to soak up additional costs incurred during the pandemic.

Martin Green, the chief executive of Care England, said, "Our own findings make it clear that a 10 percent increase will not be sufficient.

"There is a real danger that this is too little, too late, and there simply isn't time to go cap in hand in the weeks and months to come."

Instead of care companies scrabbling around for cash to keep homes running, they should be brought back into public ownership and properly funded.

Scraping for-profit homes would improve the lives of those working in them, and give the best care to some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Care death toll still unknown

THE TRUE picture of the reality of coronavirus in care homes is still unknown.

Hundreds of people have already died in care homes, yet they are not being counted towards national daily totals.

Industry body Care England thinks that the death toll in care homes is already likely to be around 1,000.

The only official statistics about deaths in care homes come from the Office of National Statistics data

which relies on death certificates—so information is delayed by several weeks.

Jason Oke, a senior statistician at the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, warned that current figures were "obviously an underestimate of the severity of the pandemic".

"The worry is that we discover in six months that the numbers are way larger because no one was counting what was happening in care homes," he said.

IN BRIEF

Police spark food riot in Nairobi

POLICE ATTACKED thousands of people desperate for food aid last Friday in Kenya's capital.

Security forces fired tear gas, beat and injured several people, witnesses said.

Residents of Nairobi's Kibera slum, spotting a food distribution, were trying to get supplies to keep their families fed for another day.

"The people who have been injured here are very many, even we cannot count," said one resident, Evelyn Kemunto.

"Both women and children have been injured. It is food we were coming for since we are dying of hunger."

Lockdowns are hitting Africa's vast population of informal workers with little or no savings.

Governments enforce a lockdown but do virtually nothing to secure people's livelihoods.

Italy quarantines refugees on boat

THE ITALIAN government has ordered migrants and refugees onboard a rescue ship off its coast to be quarantined on another vessel allegedly to test them for coronavirus.

The Alan Kurdi was sailing off the western coast of Sicily after rescuing 150 people from Libya's coast last week.

Italy has closed its ports to NGO vessels rescuing migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean.

The government gave no details on the planned transfer of refugees.

Libya also refused entry to about 280 returning migrants.

Hundreds of migrants are stranded in the Mediterranean as governments use the virus crisis as cover for a clampdown.

Bloody war in Yemen is paused

THE SAUDI-LED war on Yemen may be paused after agreement to a two-week ceasefire.

The five-year war carried out by Saudi forces against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels is backed by Britain and the US.

Years of bombing has shattered the country with an estimated 100,000 dead.

Some 75,000 children are also estimated to have starved to death. Now people face the spread of coronavirus.

As it becomes clear to Saudi Arabia that it cannot win the war, its ruling class is looking for a way out of its quagmire.

But this will be unwelcome news to the British arms industry which has made billions supplying the Saudis with bombs.

Cops in Australia target refugee solidarity action

by SADIE ROBINSON

POLICE IN Melbourne, Australia, have arrested a refugee activist for organising a protest to demand detained refugees be released.

It's a sign of how cops are using new powers under the coronavirus crisis to clamp down on political activity.

School teacher Chris Breen had organised a car cavalcade for 2pm on Friday, demanding the release of refugees being held at the Mantra Hotel.

"Police turned up at my door at lunchtime," Chris told Socialist Worker. "They asked whether I was one of the organisers of the protest and I said yes. They said in that case you're under arrest."

Chris described how cops failed to follow social distancing in the car to the police station and later in his home.

"They took my phone and all of my computers, including a work laptop and my son's computer," he said. "The aim is intimidation."

He explained why there is an urgent need to free refugees.

"We think it's only a matter of time before Covid-19 hits detention centres," he said. "They are like cruise ships on land."

Detention

A Serco guard has already tested positive in Brisbane, and guards go all over to different centres."

Chris added that some of the 72 refugees held at the Mantra Hotel have underlying medical conditions.

"Refugees sleep up to three to a room, they are not able to socially distance," he said. "Our protest was safe, it's the centres that are not safe."

GREECE**Health workers protest over poor virus response**

HEALTH WORKERS in Greece protested at 28 hospitals around the country on Tuesday of last week.

It was a challenge to the Tory-type government's claim to have handled the coronavirus crisis well, with strict lockdown measures.

And it was an antidote to the message of unity behind the government's measures, reinforced by the once-radical Syriza party.

After more than a decade of devastating austerity, enforced by Labour-type Pasok, Tory-type New Democracy and Syriza-led governments, health workers say

The 26 people who joined the cavalcade were issued with fines of \$1,652 each.

"This has a lot of implications for the unions and wider social movements," warned Chris. "We're in a deep economic and health crisis. Unions will now be more nervous about taking action. We need to find ways to protest."

New laws in Australia ban people from being outside in groups of more than two. People are only allowed to leave home for food,

medical supplies, work or for "compassionate reasons".

Chris explained how his arrest is linked to these new powers.

"The law I am charged under is a 1958 anti-protest law of incitement," he said. "But the incitement is to break the huge new health powers that police have."

Yet activists are fighting back.

"We're not going to pay the fines, we're going to challenge them," said Chris.

Refugees are holding daily

protests at Kangaroo Point Central Hotel in Brisbane. There are hunger strikes at detention centres in Sydney and Brisbane, as well as a rooftop protest at Villawood Detention Centre in Sydney.

"The refugees should be released," said Chris. "And we have to stop the Covid-19 laws being used to stamp out political protest."

Rush messages of support to refugeeactioncollective@gmail.com. Go to Refugee Action Collective (Victoria) on Facebook



Protesting in Greece

they're at breaking point.

The protests, organised by health unions, demanded increased funding for hospitals, personal protective equipment, and direct and free access to health care and tests for all.

Other demands included a ban on redundancies and scrapping subsidies to private health firms.

Thenia Aslanidi, a doctor at the Erythros Stavros hospital in Athens, said, "We are now reaching a tipping point."

"Personnel shortages mean frightening pressure."

"The climate is explosive. Those who examine patients for coronary heart disease are

dressed in special uniforms and cannot even go to the toilet for twelve hours, because there is no other uniform or anyone to replace them.

"Paramedics don't even carry thermometers in ambulances. People have to clean rooms without masks, extra gloves or shoe protectors."

Doctor Louisa Gika said, "The struggle for mass recruitment of permanent staff, for equipment and self-protection measures can save us from the criminal policy of the government."

Thanks to reporting by Workers Solidarity, Socialist Worker's sister newspaper in Greece

Keep choice for take at home pill

WOMEN WHO need the abortion pill will be able to have them sent to their homes during the lockdown.

These measures will last for two years or until the coronavirus crisis has ended.

But why does it take a global pandemic for abortion legislation to be relaxed?

The abortion pill taken at home is a safe alternative to having an abortion in a hospital.

Activists have been campaigning for people to be able to take abortion pills at home for ages.

Our argument is that women should be in a comfortable environment if they choose to take the pill.

The unwillingness to allow people to take abortion pills at home comes from a distrust in women being able to make decisions about their bodies.

Some argue that making women take abortion pills in a clinic or hospital is safer and any side effects are easier to treat.

Of course the safety of women is of the greatest importance.

But why is this only applied to those wanting an abortion?

People are allowed to take other forms of medication in their home.

The fact is abortion is treated as an entirely separate thing in the medical system. Women should always be trusted to make their own decisions about their bodies.

Molly Doherty
Manchester

Luxury furniture on sale shows double standard

AT THE start of the coronavirus pandemic lockdown the government ordered all “non-essential” shops to close.

What counts as “non-essential” has since been interpreted with considerable elasticity.

Many retailers have shut their high street outlets and moved operations online.

As a result staff working in distribution centres across the country are still having to work and being exposed to needless risks.

The managers running their workplaces are, in many cases, working from home, protecting their families from harm in a way their staff are not able to.

That fact that mostly luxury items are still being sold during a global crisis represents the dictionary definition of a false need.

It is one that has been created and exploited by a capitalist system that puts maintaining profits ahead of protecting lives.

Retail logistics worker

THE HYPOCRISY of the Tories’ friends in big business is shocking.

On Saturday 4 April a “Virtual Grand National” was televised following the cancellation of the actual event due to the coronavirus crisis.

Betting companies involved in the event encouraged us to have a flutter by promising that the profits would go to “NHS Charities Together”.

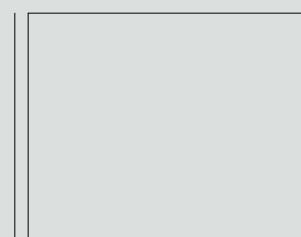
This is a charity which funds NHS staff caring for Covid-19 patients.

Yet the owners of Betfred

bookies took £5.2 million in dividends in 2016 from a company they had set up to treat gambling addictions. They also donated £375,000 to the Conservative Party.

Betting companies frequently hand out

The Tories are gambling with our lives



freebies to MPs which include trips to Ascot, Doncaster and Cheltenham races and dinner at the Conservative Conference.

We cannot allow the Tories to continue to gamble with our health.

We need to kick out the spivs from the NHS.

That means ending the Private Finance Initiative and the stealth privatisation of the NHS immediately without compensation.

Only then will the odds of avoiding a future crisis in the NHS improve.

John Carr
Liverpool

Just a thought...

Workplace's bad approach

I WANT to talk about my induction as an engineer to the estates department at a local workplace—which lasted all of three minutes.

I arrived wearing a mask and noticed three people in the small office were not despite their close proximity. I asked whether it was appropriate that I wore a mask.

He said it was not appropriate because “That’s not how we operate here.”

I asked what happens if one of us has Covid-19 and could pass it on. The manager shrugged.

That shrug told me everything I needed to know about the prevailing attitude to health and safety at this place.

John Atkinson
Scarborough

Media wants to divide us

A FEW media outlets have been photographing people in parks, blaming them for their selfishness.

These photos are often taken with a wide angle lens that often compresses perspective to make it look like people are very close to each other when they aren’t.

Again this is another attempt by some of the media to pit us against each other.

Sally Larken
Plymouth

Can we trust Keir Starmer?

I THINK new Labour leader Keir Starmer is Blair 2.0.

He is bringing back those right wingers that left when Jeremy Corbyn was leader

Andres Viveros
On Facebook

• THE LEFT should try to support and work constructively with Starmer.

He—and most of the shadow cabinet—are “soft left” or left-leaning liberals. They are not neoliberals.

We don’t want to make an enemy out of people we can ally with—if they retain much of the Corbyn policy platform—and who were initially a large part of Corbyn’s support base

Patrick William
On Facebook

ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

THE STATE WHOSE SIDE IS IT ON?

The coronavirus crisis has seen governments across the world bring in harsh new state powers. Nick Clark looks at how such measures are often employed against ordinary people—and how so-called temporary restrictions on our rights can often become permanent

BE CAREFUL what you consent to. Governments everywhere are looking to extend the powers of the state as the coronavirus crisis deepens. This real widening of state intervention can feel like a nail in the coffin for neoliberalism, where private companies run services and the state helps them profit.

For instance, the Tories promised to underwrite the wages of hundreds of thousands of workers laid off—or furloughed—as companies shut down. People in the public sector who have faced job losses, pay cuts and privatisations are hailed as the key workers we need to see us through.

Suddenly the state is back in vogue as an important part of politics, the economy and society. But there's a flipside. The coercive, threatening and repressive arms of the state are having their moment too.

The most obvious example is in Hungary, where the far right government has granted itself indefinite dictatorial powers.

Included in these are laws allowing people to be imprisoned for up to five years for breaking quarantine or publishing "distorted facts" that may "alarm or agitate".

Social distancing makes sense. But it's no good governments imposing this while refusing to do other things that we need such as wholesale testing.

And state measures don't affect



everyone equally. So the state is not using its powers against firms that force people to work in unsafe conditions. Instead it is working class people and the most vulnerable who are vigorously policed.

In Greece there are now strict regulations on the right of refugees to leave the camps they're corralled in.

The Tories in Britain are at it too. The Coronavirus Act gives cops and immigration officers powers to lock up anyone they think is infectious. Security services now have an easier time getting permission to access people's personal data.

Meanwhile, Health Protection Regulations allow cops to ask anyone why they've left their homes—and fine them if they don't have a "reasonable excuse". They can also disperse gatherings of three or more people.

There's a list of what a "reasonable" excuse might be. But the cops get to decide whether they believe you. Vague and inaccurate police and government statements have helped them along.

Anyone questioning such measures might sound a bit conspiratorial. Surely it makes sense to have new powers and keep people apart if it will help contain the virus?

An early case of Derbyshire police shaming people out walking in the Peak District—alone or in couples, far from others—is infamous.

Meanwhile cops in North



Police have been handed an array of new powers as a result of the coronavirus lockdown—and most of them target ordinary people (left) Hungarian premier Viktor Orban wants anyone spreading "distorted facts" jailed for up to five years (below)

Yorkshire went so far as to set up roadblocks to ask drivers if their journeys are essential. Amid all this, there's been a lot of talk of how British cops do "policing by consent". The idea is that the law in Britain works because we all agree to go along with it.

But when Marie Dinou didn't consent to tell British Transport Police officers why she was in Newcastle Central Station she was arrested, charged and fined £660. She hadn't done anything except "loitering between platforms".

Cops later admitted she had been wrongly charged.

Or let's say when you get there there's no PPE so you decide to walk out—as some workers already have. Don't put it past the police to decide your picket is an unnecessary gathering that should be broken up.

There are demands on the state that socialists should make and campaign for—such as shutting down workplaces and coronavirus tests for all. These measures are in the interests of workers. They are very different from the changes imposed by the state from above in the interests of those at the top.

The same goes for the countless laws and acts of privatisation designed to "open up" public services to the market over decades.

Governments will grant some demands if they feel they have to. But if it's a choice between giving us what we need or protecting the bosses, there's no question who the state sides with. Ultimately our struggle is against the state.

Even under neoliberalism, states manage to rescue the system and get



back to business as usual.

Even measures such as paying the wages of laid-off workers are designed to subsidise the bosses and see them through the shutdown.

Meanwhile the responsibility for stopping the virus spreading has been largely dumped on the shoulders of ordinary people.

So a cop might question you on your way to that non-essential job your boss still wants you in for. But you won't find them knocking on the door of your manager's office.

It turns out that "consent" is backed up by coercion, threats and even violence.

Or let's say when you get there there's no PPE so you decide to walk out—as some workers already have. Don't put it past the police to decide your picket is an unnecessary gathering that should be broken up.

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Car bosses are among many that demand the state stays out of their business—until there's a crisis, when they want a state bailout (left) Boris Johnson has expanded state aid in a bid to stabilise the system (below) Striking seafarers on the march in 1966. A Labour government used 'emergency powers' against them (right)

Dora—decades of 'emergency powers'

THIS ISN'T the first time a British government has used an emergency to grant itself swinging new powers.

Emergency powers rushed through during the First World War stuck around for decades. Four days after the start of the war, parliament passed the Defence of the Realm Act, known as Dora. It gave the government the power to bring in new restrictions whenever it saw fit.

Under the guise of stopping communications that would "jeopardise" the war effort, and protecting "railways, docks or harbours," it could lock up strikers.

A law passed in 1915 made strikes in the munitions industry illegal. The government broke a major strike by over 200,000 engineering workers in 1917 by arresting strike leaders.

Anti-war activists were sent to prison, newspapers shut down and printing presses broken up. By the end of 1917 the government employed more than 4,000 censors.

People could also be jailed for "spreading false rumours" or—more sinisterly—for being of "hostile origin or association". The Labour Party and union leaders largely backed the laws.

In the run-up to the war, Labour

was led by the pacifist Ramsay MacDonald. But under pressure to rally round the interests of the British state, MacDonald was out.

Together with union leaders, new party leader Arthur Henderson backed the war. He declared there should be no new wage claims and was awarded a place in government.

The laws were supposed to end with the war. But years of conflict, and excitement at the Russian Revolution, fuelled a rising tide of workers' strikes and militancy. So the government was keen to keep them.

The Emergency Powers Act of 1920 made the powers in Dora permanent by allowing the government to proclaim a state of emergency.

It wasn't long before the state got to use this—calling in troops against a national miners' strike in 1921.

The Act was used repeatedly against strikes, including the general strike of 1926. A Labour government declared a state of emergency against a dockers' strike in 1948-9. The

Tories used it against a rail strike in 1955, and Labour against a seafarers' strike in 1966.

The Tories used it repeatedly in the 1970s too—mostly against striking dockers and miners.



'Anti-terror' laws tied up with racism

BRITISH GOVERNMENTS—Labour and Tory—have also used supposed threats of terrorism to usher in new powers.

The 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act was said to be aimed at combating a bombing campaign by the IRA Irish republican group. It was used to persecute people of Irish origin.

Three people were charged under the act in its first three months. Two had all charges against them dropped.

Some 489 people were arrested and detained at police stations under the act during this time. Only 16 were ever charged with any offence.

After the attacks on the World Trade Centre in the US in 2001, Tony Blair's Labour government brought in the Terrorism, Crime and Security Act. Among other powers, it gave the government the right to lock up anyone with a non-British passport indefinitely without trial.

Labour added a Civil Contingencies Bill in 2004—an update of

authoritarian powers first granted during the First World War (see above). It gave governments the power to declare a state of emergency, where it can pass laws without parliament.

It also allows the government to create Local Resilience Forums—based on police force areas—that can issue instructions enforced by the threat of prison.

There have been 13 "anti-terrorism" acts introduced since 2001. The main targets are Muslims.

The Prevent programme was introduced by Labour and made law by the Tories in 2015. It turns public sector workers into spies who report on people—mostly Muslims—for signs of "extremism" and "radicalisation".

The most recent act makes it illegal to "express an opinion or belief supportive of a proscribed organisation" in a way that's "reckless" as to whether it might encourage someone else to think the same.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

Socialist Workers Party online meetings



After Keir Starmer's election —is Corbynism now dead?

BRADFORD

Thu 23 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

542-511-903

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Thu 23 Apr, 6.30pm

Zoom

391-959-428

BURNLEY & PENDLE

Wed 22 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom

446-409-5118

CAMBRIDGE

Thu 23 Apr, 5pm

Zoom 681-800-4408

COVENTRY

Wed 22 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom

587-183-5359

KENT

Fri 24 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom 434-623-8064

LEEDS

Thu 23 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

856-912-7408

LIVERPOOL

Thu 23 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

982-378-9813

LONDON:HACKNEY

Thu 23 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom

798-534-2585

LONDON:SOUTH

Wed 22 Apr, 7pm

Zoom 4

97-196-1801

LONDON:TOWER HAMLETS

Wed 22 Apr,

7.30pm

Zoom

816-197-924

NORWICH

Wed 22 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom

906-652-5299

OXFORD

Thu 23 Apr, 6.30pm

Zoom

730-258-179

SOUTHAMPTON

Wed 22 Apr,

7.30pm

Zoom

381-513-5080



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and at the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting.

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } ONLINE MEETINGS }

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

BIRMINGHAM

Politics of the mind—Marxism and mental distress

Wed 22 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

281-634-5938

BLACK COUNTRY

Second World War to coronavirus—why we're not all in it together'

Wed 22 Apr, 8pm

Zoom 352-891-2411

BRISTOL

Can workers run society?

Thu 23 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

688-397-3148

CARDIFF

Pandemics, capitalism and the economy

Thu 23 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom

630-181-4857

CHESTERFIELD

Booklaunch: Vital signs: the deadly cost of health inequality

with author Lee Humber

Thu 23 Apr,

7pm

Zoom

828-532-8731

DUNDEE & ABERDEEN

Coronavirus, the family and women's oppression

Wed 22 Apr, 8pm

Zoom 396-573-1805

EDINBURGH

Booklaunch: Transgender Resistance, Socialism and the Fight for Trans Liberation

with author Laura Miles

Wed 22 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom

431-459-112

ESSEX

Socialism in a time of pandemics

Thu 23 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

633-922-2868

GLASGOW

Second World War to coronavirus—why we're not all in it together'

Thu 23 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

810-400-6058

HUDDERSFIELD

Can workers run society?

Wed 22 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

234-919-9440

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Second World War to coronavirus—why we're not all in it together'

Thu 23 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

992-204-9372

LONDON:HARINGEY

Coronavirus, the family and women's oppression

Wed 22 Apr, 7pm

Zoom 459-388-1576

LONDON:ISLINGTON

Capitalism and the politics of food

Thu 23 Apr, 6.30pm

Zoom 874-012-7970

LONDON:NEWHAM

Can workers run society?

Wed 22 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

736-446-743

LONDON:SOUTH EAST

Politics of the mind: Marxism and mental health

Wed 22 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom

529-913-6390

LONDON:WALTHAM FOREST

Coronavirus, the family and women's oppression

Wed 22 Apr, 7.30pm

Zoom 543-023-057

MANCHESTER:

Coronavirus, the family and women's oppression

Wed 22 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

996-385-827

NEWCASTLE

Trotsky and the united front

Wed 22 Apr, 7pm

Zoom

488-934-2809

SHEFFIELD & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Mental health, society and the crisis

Thu

Devs is a sci-fi thriller that asks ambitious questions

This major series, new to the BBC, treads some familiar ground—but it's a good mix of standard sci-fi with a cultish, religious theme, writes **Nick Clark**

ALREADY A hit in the US on streaming site Hulu, sci-fi thriller Devs is coming to the BBC.

In the woods of Silicon Valley, Amaya—a giant mysterious tech firm with links to the government—is conducting experiments that touch on human behaviour.

When Sergei disappears after joining Amaya's ultra-secretive development department—or Devs—his partner Lily is drawn into a frightening search for the truth.

Shadowy organisations conducting dangerous, world-threatening experiments aren't exactly a new concept to science fiction. But it's done very well with some genuinely disturbing moments, a score to set you on edge, and an almost flawless script.

There are shades of Cambridge Analytica—the real-life company that claimed it could use data collected from the internet to predict and influence how people vote.

When we first meet Sergei, he's working on a programme that can predict exactly the future movements of a living organism.

But Amaya is up to something far more profound—with a distinctly religious, cultish feel.

To start with there's the giant statue of a child. It towers above the trees with arms raised and a facial expression that crosses wonder and fear.

Twisted

This child's face is everywhere like some twisted corporate motif, and the fact that no one seems to mind only makes it creepier. Then there's the temple-like building deep in the woods where Devs do their work.

Inside it's all a bit Star Trek. Outside, it's a little bit Wicker Man.

And directing the shared purpose of this insular woodland community is the Christ-like chief executive Forest. He's a long-haired, bearded man who talks of betrayal, forgiveness, absolution and destiny.

When Sergei suffers a violent reaction after figuring out Devs' purpose, Forest confronts him with a devastating proposition—that the universe is deterministic. Everybody's actions—and everything that happens—are already decided by the circumstances that led to them, and can't be altered.

It's a fatalistic understanding of the events of the past and future—and one with troubling moral implications for those of the present.

So it's a bit suspect—but then Forest is someone who's not to be trusted.

And as Lily investigates what happened to Sergei, maybe she might discover something much deeper.

BBC Two and iPlayer, 9pm 15 April



YVES TUMOR'S look reflects their music

A genre-crossing album to get lost in

MUSIC

HEAVEN TO A TORTURED MIND

Yves Tumor. Out now

THIS IS Yves Tumor's fourth full-length release, and it's as elusive and mysterious as ever.

Heaven To A Tortured Mind is a heady mix of psychedelic rock, soul, contemporary pop and the experimental.

It's an alternative realm far away to escape to temporarily.

From the funk-infused opener Gospel For A New Century, to the sun-drenched reverb of lo-fi guitars on Kerosene.

The concoction of chaotic instrumentation on Dream Palette to dreamlike soundscapes made up of scattered lyrics, synths and distortion in Folie Imposee.

It's another dimension of varying moods and intrigue, and an exploration of desire, a theme which is laced throughout the record.

Tumor delves into human sexuality on Identity Trade. It's a track full of fluid rhythmic blended expression, matching Tumor's gender non-conforming style and non-binary identity.

Tumor doesn't fear

confrontation. The track Hasdallen Lights is littered with questions—"What are you running from?", "Tell me what do you crave?" and, "How do you feel?"

It demands that we confront our own thoughts, creating a dialogue between us and the listener.

Heaven To A Tortured Mind is very much open for interpretation, imbued with a free-spiritedness and embodying all that is transcendent.

It's a record which deserves to be played on repeat.

Lois Browne

LITERATURE

BOOK CLUB AT SALON LONDON

Tickets £5, available at salon-london.com

SALON LONDON, an organiser of cultural events, is streaming live "book club" Q&As every Sunday with authors throughout the coronavirus outbreak.

Sunday of next week will feature bestselling author and historian Hallie Rubenhold.

She's the author of *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack*



the Ripper. Salon says her book "reclaims the five women who became the Ripper's victims".

Until now, says Salon, they "had never been given a voice of their own and, worse, had been disregarded by society for over 130 years".

The following Sunday, 5 May, will feature Robert Elliott Smith, author of



Robert Elliott Smith

Rage Inside the Machine. It explores questions about bias and inequality in algorithms and the interests of those who programme them.

"Why are algorithms prejudiced?" it asks. "Is it a product of a hidden, bigoted, politically-activist programmer cabal?

"Is it that big data analytics are simply revealing the ugly truths about ourselves and our society? Or, could it just be something inherent in algorithms themselves?"

Both events will feature a short conversation with Salon London's Helen Bagnall, before opening up to online questions.

Numbers are limited and access if £5, or free if you buy the book.

THE BRITISH invasion started with musket shots that wounded indigenous people. Next came massacres, and then the genocide of an indigenous population.

The crew of the British ship Endeavour, under the command of Lieutenant James Cook, reached the east coast of New Holland—now called Australia—in April 1770.

As they advanced ashore they met members of the local Gweagal people who, unsurprisingly, resented this arrogant incursion. One Gweagal man threw a rock, and Cook responded with musket fire, hitting him in the leg.

The British crew fired further shots to drive off those who were defending their land with spears.

Cook recorded the resistance to the British landing party, writing in his journal that “all they seem’d to want was for us to be gone”.

But instead the Union Jack was raised and the harbour where the British had landed was named Botany Bay. Cook stole the Gweagals’ shield and spears that they had left behind.

They are still in the British Museum.

After a few days Cook set off. As the Endeavour sailed, the crew noted from the sea what they called Port Jackson—another day the site of Sydney—and then they went past the site of Brisbane.

On 22 August the Endeavour reached Possession Island off the north coast of what is now Queensland.

Cook was confident that no other Europeans had been there before.

SO HAVING already “in the Name of His Majesty, taken Possession of several places upon this Coast” he “now once more hoisted English Colours in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third”.

He “took Possession of the whole Eastern Coast from the 38 degrees Latitude down to this place, by the Name of New South Wales together with all the Bays, Harbours, Rivers & Islands situated upon the said Coast”.

It’s one thing to proclaim ownership, another to secure it.

It generally took eight months to sail from England to Australia and there was almost no attempt to colonise it for many years. But with the loss of their American colonies in 1783, British attention turned again to the Pacific.

In 1788 British settlement really began with the arrival of the “First Fleet”. Eleven ships carried between 1,000 and 1,500 convicts, marines, seafarers, civil officers and workers.

They set up a penal colony and began a brutal land seizure. British settlers carried out



“AUSTRALIA—THE first hundred years”, by Andrew Garran showing people opposing Cook in 1770

COOK’S TOUR DRENCHED IN BLOOD

British explorer James Cook arrived on the east coast of Australia 250 years ago. His incursion was part of a horrific imperialist expansion, writes Charlie Kimber

dozens of massacres against Aboriginal communities that resisted invasion.

One massacre in April 1816 saw the savaging of the Gundangara and Dharrawal people.

Governor Lachlan Macquarie wrote later that he had “Military Detachments to march into the Interior and remote parts of the Colony, for the purpose of punishing the Hostile Natives, by clearing the Country of them entirely”.

He went on that he had commanded that any resisters were to be killed and their

Cook’s voyage was enmeshed in the growth of the British state and empire



Captain Cook

bodies hung from trees “in order to strike the greatest terror in the survivors”.

Aboriginal prisoners were transported to Tasmania. They arrived just as settlers and convicts started stepping up their ferocious attacks on the island’s local population.

Cook’s journeys took place at a critical time of capitalist industrial expansion. He arrived in Australia five years after James Hargreaves had invented the Spinning Jenny, automating cloth weaving.

At around the same time the whole of Australia, as well as New Zealand, were claimed by the British based on Cook’s

“discoveries”. In fact Indigenous Australians were at least 60,000 years ahead of him.

Racist and imperial onslaughts have continued since Cook’s time. As the journalist and film maker John Pilger wrote in 2015, “Influenced by the same eugenics movement that inspired the Nazis, Queensland’s ‘protection acts’ were a model for South African apartheid.

“We are civilised, they are not,” wrote the acclaimed Australian historian Russel Ward two generations ago. The spirit is unchanged.”

Such appalling results are not divorced from the context of Cook’s voyage. Usually described as a voyage of scientific exploration, it was enmeshed in the growth of the British state and empire.

It’s not necessary to ascribe imperialist motives to every act by Cook and his party. But it is certainly true that they and their mission served such a process.

In the later part of the 18th century there was a sharp battle for control among the European powers.

Britain, France, Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands had at various periods been leaders in exploration that led to conquest.

But the British ruling class pulled ahead as the industrial revolution began.

They had the advantage of plentiful raw materials, a geographical position that partially shielded them from European wars—and a successful revolution that had put the capitalist class in control.

During the 18th century the British state massively increased military spending to build up a powerful war machine, centred on the Royal Navy.

THE state’s dockyards were at the time the largest industrial organisation in Britain, linked to a network of privately owned capitalist suppliers and repairers.

Sea power was crucial in allowing Britain to dominate trade routes and set up colonies that could help pay for the development of industry and deliver raw materials.

In particular the blood and filth of the slave trade channelled funds to the growth of industrial capitalism.

As historian Robin Blackburn says, “By the 1770s the British colonies had the largest number of slaves, followed by Portugal (in Brazil), then the French and Spanish colonies.”

Cook’s journeys took place at a critical time of capitalist industrial expansion. He arrived in Australia five years after James Hargreaves had invented the Spinning Jenny, automating cloth weaving.

As he reached Tahiti in a later voyage, James Watt was building the first efficient

steam engine. The voyage of the Endeavour was therefore part of a competition to search for and seize territory that until then had been largely unknown to Europeans—especially the South Pacific.

It was hoped that like South America and Africa there could be plunder and slaves.

As early as 1745 parliament offered any British subject £20,000 if they found the Northwest passage from Hudson Bay in North America to the Pacific.

That’s a reward the equivalent of about £5 million today.

But nothing had resulted, and instead the Spanish military had built forts on the Juan Fernandez Islands in the South Pacific off the west coast of Chile.

The British were determined to stake their own claim.

Cook’s journey was supposed to be about transporting scientists to the Pacific to observe the moment when Venus crossed the sun.

His crew, swelled by astronomers and botanists, was one of 76 European expeditions involved in this project.

But he also carried a packet of secret orders that he was commanded to open only when he had completed his observations of the heavenly bodies.

When the orders were revealed, they told Cook “to observe the genius, temper, disposition and number of the natives, if there be any, and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a friendship and alliance with them.

“You are also with the consent of the natives to take possession of convenient situations in the country, in the name of the King of Great Britain.”

The consent of the natives turned out to be an optional extra. Vast territories were seized for the empire and their owners annihilated.

A full copy of the Admiralty’s “Secret Instructions” wasn’t made public until 1928.

The history of imperialism is full of brutality. But it is also one of brave resistance—as Cook discovered.

In 1799, on another voyage, he was in Hawaii. He clashed with some of the local inhabitants, although others offered him assistance.

A group of Hawaiians took one of Cook’s small boats, who responded by shooting at one man who had been “insolent” according to the British.

The battle to destroy imperialism and racism continues.

READ MORE

• A Secret Country

by John Pilger, £12.99

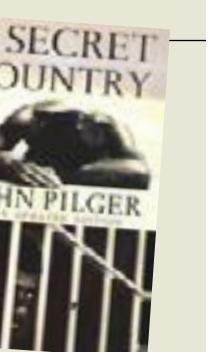
• The fatal impact

by Alan Moorehead from second hand sellers, £6

• Socialist group

Solidarity’s articles on Aboriginal issues
solidarity.net.au/articles/aboriginal

available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



FOCUS ON THE CRISIS

Racism, not genetics, explains different Covid-19 death rates

Black and Asian people are more likely to die from Covid-19—but that isn’t unavoidable, says Yuri Prasad

THE FRONT page of Socialist Worker last week featured faces of some of the many workers in Britain who have died from coronavirus. Of the eight people pictured, six were black or Asian.

The photos reflect a tragic fact—that black and Asian people are being hit harder by Covid-19 than white people.

The Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre last week found that 35 percent of almost 2,000 patients were “non-white”. That’s nearly three times the proportion in the population as a whole.

Some 14 percent of the most serious cases were Asian, and another 14 percent were African, or African-Caribbean.

How can we explain such disproportionate figures?

Some have pointed to underlying health conditions that particularly affect black and Asian people. They suggest that these factors are unavoidable, or even genetic.

But distorted and racialised patterns of work and poverty are the key drivers of difference.

Many people of working age who died from the virus were health workers, terribly exposed because of the lack of protective equipment and testing.

Midwives

Hundreds of thousands of people who work in the health service are from black and Asian backgrounds. That includes over 40 percent of specialist doctors in England and more than half of London’s nurses and midwives.

It was reported last week that nine London bus workers had died from the virus. A glance at their names and pictures tells us that many, if not most, were likely black or Asian. Bus workers are generally



compared to 2 percent of white British people. Diseases that make Covid-19 worse are more likely found among black and Asian people. But again it is social conditions that determine how healthy we are likely to be.

Diabetes

For example, British people of South Asian, African or African-Caribbean origin are significantly more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes than their European counterparts.

This disease appears to be a significant risk factor for anyone with Covid-19.

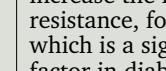
But there is little evidence that this is primarily the result of a genetic trait.

People working long hours are less likely to get regular medical check-ups and good advice. They find making time for exercise difficult.

They are more likely to have a cheap and quick diet with unhealthy amounts of trans fat and saturated fats, and grains such as white rice.

That can make self-isolation extremely difficult and helps spread the disease.

Some 30 percent of the British Bangladeshi population live in overcrowded conditions.



Commentators love to tell us that coronavirus is a great leveller and that it attacks rich and poor, black and white, indiscriminately. The truth is that race and class determine to a large degree who gets sick, how sick they get—and whether they recover.

Argos workers angry at being ‘collateral damage’

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

ARGOS warehouse workers say they are being “put in danger” to keep company profits rolling in during the coronavirus crisis.

The retail giant has told its warehouse staff that they are “key workers”—and has failed to protect their health and safety.

Workers say they could be delivering vital personal protective equipment (PPE) instead of items such as home furnishings.

One warehouse worker in Basildon, Essex, told Socialist Worker, “We feel like we’re being put in danger to handle non-essential items.”

“If Argos gave themselves over to deliver PPE, I would be there straight away.”

“But I don’t want to risk my life for an ironing board. Are we collateral damage who can get the virus just to keep the economy going?”

The parent company—supermarket chain Sainsbury’s—sent out two letters to the warehouse workers. One claimed the warehouse staff were “key



ARGOS WORKERS in Basildon struck in 2017

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

workers” and that “their role is directly related to the sale and operation of food within our business”.

Another letter—for Argos workers to produce if cops questioned why they were going to work—classed them as a “critical service”.

Supermarket bosses have

tried to get around lockdown restrictions by claiming all of their services are “essential”.

They closed high street Argos shops, but outlets based out of Sainsbury’s shops remain open to pick up online orders.

The worker in Basildon says bosses are insisting that

they pack deliveries to the high street shops. “We’re talking 20, 30 or 40 cages going out to places that are closed,” he said. “Personally, I think they’ve used it as an opportunity to stock up the stores.”

Workers carrying out “non-essential” work should be at home on full pay and those needed to keep society going should have PPE.

But the Argos worker said the warehouse was a “big box full of germs being stirred up by trucks”—with workers concentrated together more than usual. He explained, “Management talk about social distancing, but then

encourage people from other shifts on to the earlier one, which is often busier.”

“Some hand sanitiser and wipes turned up this week, but we didn’t have any for two weeks.”

“We work with pallet trucks and battery packs and other equipment that is all shared by three shifts.”

“I asked, ‘If we’re essential staff why don’t we have PPE?’ and they just say that we don’t need it to do our job.”

The union leaders have been slow to take up demands for fear of losing a seat at the top table with ministers and bosses.

The worker said, “The union doesn’t want to rock the boat and say this ain’t right.”

“They’re rolling over and having their belly rubbed by management—and it’s so frustrating for us.”

Bosses haven’t stopped treating workers like dirt—so unions should not declare a class truce.

More online

For more go to www.socialistworker.co.uk

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Viruses and the sick system that destroys our environment

Pandemics and viral outbreaks aren't an accident of nature. Fresh research confirms how tearing up animals' natural habitats and intensive farming are to blame, writes **Sadie Robinson**

 SYSTEMATIC TEARING up of the environment over centuries has increased the risk of pandemics, according to a new report.

And as climate change wreaks more havoc, the situation will get worse.

Researchers found that processes such as urbanisation and deforestation have increased the risk of viruses "spilling over" from animals to humans.

The same processes are putting species at risk of extinction.

Lead author of the report Christine Johnson said, "Spillover of viruses from animals is a direct result of our actions involving wildlife and the habitat. This puts us at risk of pandemics."

Some have pushed racist, simplistic and short-term explanations for the recent Covid-19 outbreak, such as blaming Chinese people for "eating bats".

Yet the report said a "historical account of how humans have altered their contact with animals" over centuries was needed to understand the increase in risk.

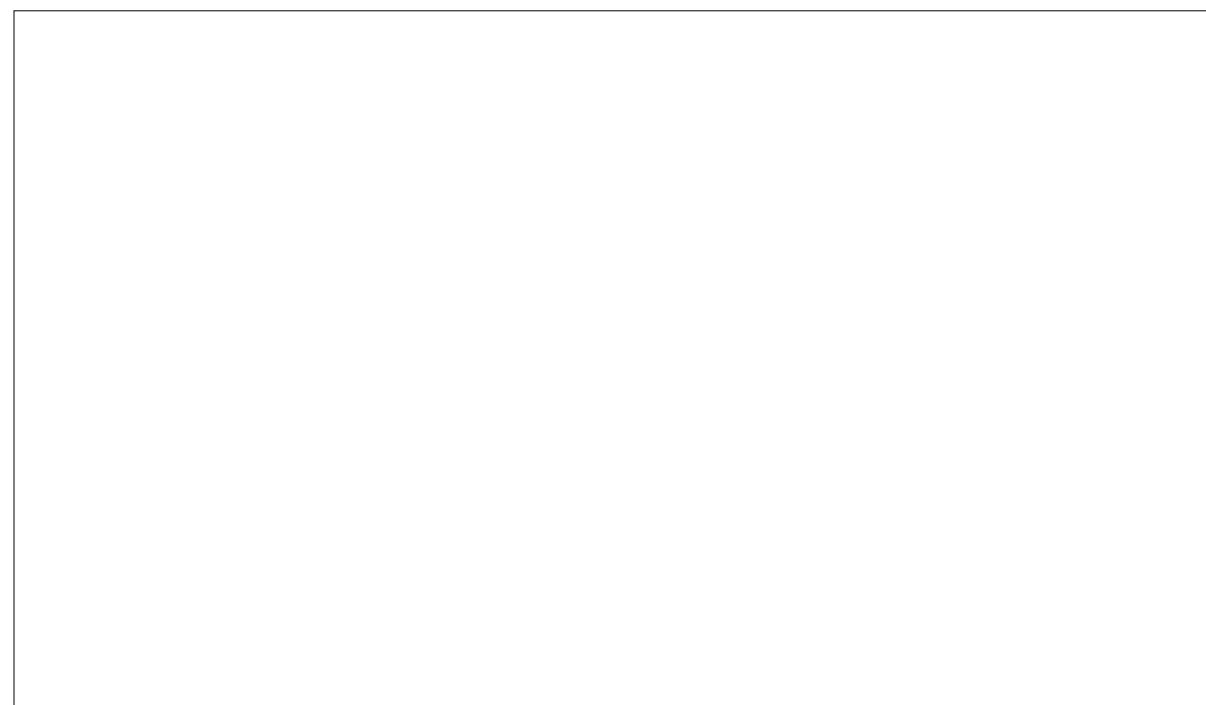
Extinction

Researchers looked at scientific papers on the 142 known viruses that pass from animals to humans.

They also looked at the risks of extinction for those species, and the causes of their declines.

The evidence suggested that the transmission risk has been highest from species that "have increased in abundance by adapting to human-dominated landscapes".

Domesticated animals, primates and bats had more zoonotic



DEFORESTATION CAN help to unleash deadly viruses

viruses—those that can pass from animals to humans—than other species.

But species threatened due to exploitation or habitat changes had over twice as many zoonotic viruses compared to species endangered for other reasons.

"Our findings provide further evidence that exploitation, as well as activities that have caused losses in habitat quality, have facilitated zoonotic disease transmission," researchers said.

The rising number of endangered species due to environmental damage has led to human actions to try and

cut the risk of extinction. But this has also put such species in greater contact with people.

A group of scientists made similar warnings last month, saying it is almost always human behaviour that causes diseases to spill over.

Human action doesn't always lead to species decline. Some thrive and adapt to the changes humans have brought about, such as some bats and rodents.

But the report found that such animals have then shared more viruses with people.

Researchers found that both

animal species that are abundant and those in decline can pass diseases to humans.

But this isn't simply a natural process.

Crucially, it is human exploitation of wildlife habitats and damage to the environment that creates greater risk.

The report concluded that infectious diseases from animals "have emerged at an increased pace within the last century". They "are likely to continue to emerge" as "environmental change is likely to intensify close proximity animal-human interactions in the near future".

Capitalism is a virus hotspot

 THE increasing risk of pandemics is to do with how society is organised. Under capitalism profit comes before the safety, health and wellbeing of ordinary people and animals.

Capitalism has drawn millions into huge cities, destroying habitats and drawing more animals into urban areas.

In an agricultural system based on maximising profit, animals are often kept in overcrowded and dirty conditions.

Big business dominates and farms have grown in size—bringing animals together in bigger numbers. And the short-term goal of making money comes before protecting the environment and land for the future.

A system driven by profit will always sacrifice our health and safety. But those at the top prefer to blame "backward" practices in poorer countries.

A recent article in Monthly Review magazine noted that "the capital interests backing production-induced changes in land use and disease emergency" in the Global South blame "outbreaks on indigenous populations".

They support research that focuses on the outbreak zone of a virus. But looking at the capital interests driving the environmental changes instead "suddenly turns New York, London and Hong Kong into three of the world's worst hotspots".

Kept animals have highest crossover rate with people

 SPILLOVER occurs when a pathogen—an infectious agent such as a virus—is passed from one species to another.

Zoonoses are infectious diseases that can move from animals to humans.

Modern examples include Ebola.

More than two thirds of human viruses are zoonotic.

But most spillover events don't lead to the virus then being passed from human to human—for instance rabies.

The report found that wild animals "are the

source of the majority of recently emerging infectious diseases".

But domesticated animals, including livestock, have shared the highest number of viruses with humans.

The study said there are eight times more zoonotic viruses in domesticated mammalian species compared to wild mammalian species.

They argue that this is likely to be a result of humans' close interactions with these animals over centuries.

Domesticated livestock



Managing an Ebola outbreak

also plays a big role in transmission of zoonotic viruses to humans.

Researchers found that domesticated species of animal had an average of 19.3 such viruses compared to wild species which had an average of 0.23.

They identified the mammalian species with the highest number of zoonotic viruses shared with humans.

Those with the highest number of viruses are pigs, cattle and horses with 31 each. Sheep had 30, dogs 27, goats

22, cats 16 and camels 15.

The only wild animals among the top ten were the house mouse with 16 and the black rat with 14.

At the time of the report, more than a fifth of mammalian species were under threat of extinction.

Exploitation and declines in habitat were partly to blame in over half of the species.

Both factors are linked to a rising risk of viruses passing from animals to humans.

British economy is heading for a slump that is ‘off the scale’

by CHARLIE KIMBER

THE BRITISH economy is heading for a recession forecast to be deeper than the 2007 financial crisis—and one of the most severe since 1900.

The crucial question is who will pay.

Analysis in the Financial Times newspaper suggests the fall in annual production this year will be greater than any year in the Second World War or in 1931.

That was a year of ferocious economic depression.

Natwest economist Michelle Girard says there “is little doubt that it will be off the scale”.

More than nine million workers are expected to be “furloughed” under the government’s job retention scheme (JRS), according to the Resolution Foundation.

This sees workers laid off for an indefinite period with up to 80 percent of wages funded by the state. If the nine million figure is correct, the take-up will be three times what the government estimated.

Up to nine million other workers may not be eligible for the JRS, according to an Institute of Employment Rights briefing (see below).

Benefit

Job cuts have been brutal across the globe. A record 6.6 million US workers filed for unemployment benefit last week, bringing the total number to almost 17 million over the past four weeks.

About four million workers in France have been temporarily laid off in the past two weeks.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO)—a United Nations agency—last week described the impact worldwide.

It said, “Four out of five workers in the global workforce have been reportedly impacted by Covid-19 such as having lost jobs or working less hours.”

“81 percent of the global

BACK STORY

Global capitalism is headed for a huge slump

- The OECD organisation of leading capitalist states estimate that economies could lose around 25 percent of output if lockdowns continue for a year
- That’s more than the US economy lost in output during the worst years of the Great Depression of the 1930s
- Coronavirus is the trigger, but the slump shows underlying weaknesses in capitalism

workforce, 2.64 billion people, are currently affected by full or partial workplace closures.”

The ILO said the eventual increase in unemployment for 2020 would depend on economic developments and policy measures.

But it warned there was a “high risk that the end of year figure will be significantly higher than the initial ILO projection of 25 million”.

The World Bank said the coronavirus pandemic will plunge sub-Saharan Africa into its first recession in 25 years. Global trade in commodities that many of its economies rely on has contracted.

Growth in the region is forecast to fall from 2.4 percent in 2019 to between -2.1 percent and -5.1 percent.

That’s far below expected population growth of 2.7 percent.

The result—unless there is huge shifts in wealth and power—will be unemployment, poverty, starvation and deaths.

The same analysis said growth in many Asian economies will slow by almost 4 percentage points this year—at best. Ergys Islamaj, a World Bank senior economist, said, “It could increase poverty across the region.”

The crisis shows the need to break from the chaos of capitalism and have a democratically planned socialist economy to meet human needs.

BANKERS, BOSSSES and governments will try to make ordinary people pay for the downturn

RESISTANCE

Don’t let lockdown help our rulers get away with new wave of austerity cuts

JUST LIKE after the financial crisis in 2007, there will be a massive struggle as governments expect ordinary people to foot the bill for bailouts.

After the Tories’ cheers for the NHS fade away, they would like to reimpose public spending cuts. Chancellor Rishi Sunak has already said that the money for the bailouts will have to be paid back.

But coronavirus has shown the failings of capitalism and fuelled discussion about the alternatives.

Ruling classes should not be allowed to get away with austerity cuts as they did a decade ago.

An article in Bloomberg News last week said, “The immediate

effect of Covid-19 is to dampen most forms of unrest.

“Both democratic and authoritarian governments force their populations into lockdowns, which keep people from taking to the streets or gathering in groups.

“But behind the doors of quarantined households, in the lengthening lines of soup kitchens, in prisons and slums and refugee camps—wherever people were hungry, sick and worried even before the outbreak—tragedy and trauma are building up.

“One way or another, these pressures will erupt.”

Resistance can shape what happens after the coronavirus crisis.

No help for ‘self-employed’

THOSE WHO don’t qualify for the Tories’ job retention scheme include one million people on zero hours contracts and around one million agency workers.

But there are also five million people working for someone, but not under a contract of employment.

This includes bogus self-employed people, such as Uber drivers, working for someone who is not the client

or customer of their business.

The Institute of Employment Rights added, “A significant gap exists for those forced to stay out of work to care for people who would otherwise be provided for by nurseries, schools, day care centres and other public services.

“While it is possible for these workers to be furloughed, it is unlikely they will be.”

Chancellor Rishi Sunak

SOCIAL CARE

Workers' campaign wins safety results

by SARAH BATES

WORKERS IN a south England council forced their bosses to take action to protect their safety last week.

Colin, who works in a social care team, became concerned after workers were crammed into one floor of a council building. Meanwhile other areas of the building were empty.

He told Socialist Worker that non-essential workers were kept in the council building, and there was increasing footfall in shared areas like kitchens and toilets.

"After about three or four days, our concerns were escalating and were not being acted on."

Rights

"So I quoted Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act. This advises workers that they have the right not to work if they feel their health and safety is being threatened."

"Within half an hour of mentioning that, there was a meeting of the senior management."

"It's a shame that I had to quote legislation for them to



EVERYONE DESERVES a safe workplace

PICTURE: DARIO HOPELY

listen," he said. Management moved some workers to a vacant floor, making it safer for all council workers.

And Colin said that even more workers could stop coming into communal council buildings—if only management would listen.

"The entire team can work from home."

"There's no reason for myself and colleagues to be in the office—other than management worrying we won't be doing enough work."

"We still have to do visits to clients, but there's no reason for us to be office-based, we've all got the capacity to work from home if required."

And Colin said that the council wasn't making use of workers' offers to now be redeployed to essential services that need more support.

"A lot of my colleagues working from home, they feel undervalued and de-skilled. They're putting themselves forward volunteering for jobs and they're just being told

'no'—but management aren't giving reasons why."

"They created lists of workers willing to do other work right now—but they are claiming that for now these workers are not needed."

Colin's experience shows that far from management worries about workers slackening off during the Covid-19 pandemic, their skills and experience are not being put to use in the most effective way.

●Colin is a pseudonym

UNIVERSITES AND COLLEGES

Education needs fundamental change

ACTIVISTS IN the UCU union have launched an open letter calling on big changes in higher education in the wake of the coronavirus crisis.

The letter, backed by the UCU Left group, calls for an end to market competition in universities and for tuition fees to be scrapped.

It calls coronavirus "a wake-up call for the whole of society" that also poses an "existential financial crisis" for higher education.

Government policy had already caused chaos in universities. But coronavirus "changes the economic equation".

"Universities can expect a sharp fall in total student numbers in September," says the open letter. "It may be several years before the overseas student market recovers."

"Drastic action is required to save higher education."

Unless the government acts now, the UK will see mass redundancies of university staff."

The letter demands emergency measures to stop universities going bankrupt. It calls for an end to fees, underwriting of the higher education sector and a pledge that there should be no redundancies.

●Sign the letter at uculeft.org/2020/03/open-letter-covid-19-rethink-he/

■**BOSSES AT** a London college have told workers their hours might be slashed to zero—and that they don't know if jobs could be furloughed.

The UCU union said "callous" Stanmore College failed to properly investigate whether it could use the government's job protection scheme.

An email to staff on 31 March read, "This letter is to

formally notify you that your hours as a Variable Hour Lecturer/Assessor/Support/Temporary staff at Stanmore College MAY temporarily be reduced to zero hours as a result of the ongoing pandemic.

"I am, therefore, writing to give you a two week notice of a change to your contract with Stanmore College. The effective date will be 10 April 2020."

It claimed bosses had "explored options to avoid this action" including the job retention scheme "but it is unclear as to whether we can claim this for Variable Hour Lecturers".

The plans would leave some workers with no income at a time when it is very hard to find alternative work.

UCU general secretary Jo Grady called on bosses to halt the plans.
Sadie Robinson

RMT

THE RMT transport workers' RMT union suspended Steve Hedley, assistant general secretary, last week.

Hedley's suspension came after comments on Facebook saying he'd "throw a party" if Boris Johnson died.

Hedley was suspended after the RMT NEC met, which voted to suspend him. RMT members are reporting that he wasn't told about the meeting. Some RMT members are raising motions in support of Hedley.

BIN WORKERS

MEDWAY NORSE, a partnership between Medway council in Kent and outsourcer Norse, has reneged on an agreement over coronavirus safety won after a recent walkout.

Medway Norse has also announced that it is de-recognition Unite and its health and safety reps.

●Protest to Managing Director Dean.Wetteland@ncsgrp.co.uk and Medway Council Leader alan.jarrett@medway.gov.uk Steve Wilkins

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Tower Hamlets council retreats—for the moment

THOUSANDS OF workers are celebrating after an east London council backed off from sacking them at the eleventh hour.

Tower Hamlets council was due to sack around 4,000 workers on Tuesday of this week and then re-employ them on worse contracts.

But in a dramatic move, the Labour council said it would suspend the Tower Rewards programme until June.

The contracts would undermine workers' severance pay, redundancy agreement, and pay grading scheme.

Unison and NEU members were due to strike for one day in March and two days in April.

But the walkouts were

pulled as coronavirus hit the capital, and workers wanted to deliver key services.

John McLoughlin, Tower Hamlets Unison branch secretary said, "We're pleased—it's a victory for the moment."

"We feel it's a victory for our members, a credit to their resilience and a victory for people in our community," said John.

"We've got a battle still to come. But it was a principled decision to suspend the action."

"This underscores our determination that, at the end of this crisis, ordinary workers will not be asked to pay the price, and not be forced into accepting detrimental conditions," he said.

CONSTRUCTION

FLOWERS WERE laid at the Building Worker statue at Tower Hill in London last Sunday to mourn construction workers who will lose their lives unnecessarily during the coronavirus pandemic. It was part of the #ShutTheSites movement.

RESISTANCE

We can still beat bosses

I HAD a little victory at work last week. I was on a building site and insisted to the manager that we should be observing full coronavirus safety rules.

He said it was impossible, that he didn't like my attitude and that I would be off the site.

I said I wasn't having that and I would use all the health and safety legislation.

I also rang the owner of the site and said I was going to shut it down. They immediately capitulated.

These are tough times, but

we can still fight and win. Let's stand up for ourselves **Building worker**

■**THE KEADBURY2** site near Scunthorpe, where SSE is building a new gas power station, has been shut down.

There was an outcry after it emerged that workers were being forced to use fingerprint machines to clock into the site, which could spread coronavirus.

Workers demanded to be sent home and this has now happened.

NHS

Workers fight for safe kit

>>continued from page 20 FFP3 masks from her friend who works at a building materials store.

A decade of Tory cuts and privatisation has left the NHS woefully underprepared.

Earlier this month it was revealed that the Department of Health had rejected advice to stockpile eye protection in case of a virus outbreak.

In 2015—under then-health secretary Jeremy Hunt—advisers recommended "eye

protection for all hospital, community, ambulance and social care staff who have close contact with pandemic influenza patients."

Department of Health officials told them to reconsider their recommendations because of "the very large incremental cost oveye protection".

●Brenda is a pseudonym. Go to **Health Worker Coronavirus Activists Group** on Facebook to get involved

NHS STAFF CALL DAY OF ACTION

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

HEALTH WORKERS are organising a day of action after Tory minister Matt Hancock sparked outrage for telling them to not to overuse protective kit.

Supporters of the Health Worker Coronavirus Activists Network will take part in a variety of workplace actions to demand "health before profit" on Thursday.

The group has called on people to raise slogans for proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and mass testing during the weekly "Clap for the NHS."

Hancock said workers had to "treat PPE like the precious resource it is" last Friday. "Everyone should use the equipment they clinically need, in line with the guidelines—no more and no less," he said.

Disgusted

Brenda, an occupational therapist at Homerton hospital in east London, said workers are "absolutely furious and disgusted".

"It makes it sound like the



HEALTH WORKERS are still struggling to get the equipment they need

masks were more important than our lives," she told Socialist Worker.

"Workers are a precious resource—this is not a war and we are not soldiers."

She added, "One of my big fears was a colleague dying

and now we've found out one of our doctors has died from Covid-19.

"He had warned the government about PPE."

Just three weeks ago Doctor Abdul Mabud Chowdhury had urged Boris

Johnson to "urgently" provide PPE for "each and every NHS worker" in Britain.

The Tory government has confirmed 19 deaths of health workers, but the number is thought to be higher.

Michael Rees, who

sits on the BMA doctors' organisation's national council, tweeted last Saturday, "BMA sources indicate 28 NHS staff have died from coronavirus not 19."

One nurse in south Essex told Socialist Worker that the

lack of PPE was "corporate manslaughter". "It's diabolical," she said. "We are dealing with large cohorts of coronavirus positive patients.

"There is no ventilation and staff are in there for eight or 12 hour shifts so the likelihood of transmission is considerably high."

Workers have asked for the FFP3 mask—which offers more protection—and gowns to cover their uniforms. "We're told we don't need them," said the nurse.

"Frontline staff were told they can all wear the surgical mask, plastic apron and gloves.

"But the surgical mask is not as tight and is not protecting. The FFP3s are even being denied to some A&E staff.

"Staff who are not in the resuscitation room where the very sickest are intubated are denied the masks.

"But the resuscitation rooms are right by the main A&E areas, and the doors open and close many times."

Brenda was experiencing similar problems in Homerton. She said she had to get

>>**continued on page 19**

Use opportunities to protest over corona crisis

ANGER OVER the NHS is an opportunity to build opposition to the Tories who have gambled with people's lives.

Health unions have been slow to take action because their leaders want to sit alongside ministers and managers at the top table.

But unrest at the grassroots and the mounting death toll has pushed them to make calls for proper kit. Dave Prentis, Unison union general secretary, said the "time for excuses has passed" over PPE failures.

The Royal College of Nursing told members they could "refuse to work" without PPE as a "last resort".

Workers at some hospitals have won some victories over health and safety guidance.

At Homerton hospital, in east London, workers demanded that management alter the guidance over PPE.

"You could see how relieved people were when the guidance changed last week," said occupational therapist Brenda.

Activists also organised a solidarity with bus workers selfie. Brenda said, "Bus drivers are

just as important as we are, but have no PPE at all and don't have so much support from the public as we do.

"When I asked my team about doing the selfie, they thought that's a really good idea."

Workers at other hospitals should take the lead of Homerton staff and show solidarity with bus workers. And trade unions at other workplaces should twin with hospitals to support health workers.

Meanwhile at other hospitals, people come outside during the "Clap for the NHS"—a clear opportunity to protest over the healthcare crisis during social distancing.

Raising solidarity with bus workers

Health care is 'rationed'

DOCTORS WILL have to "score" tens of thousands of patients to determine if they qualify for lifesaving treatment.

A new NHS tool will score patient according to their age, frailty and underlying conditions.

Those who score less than eight points would likely not be admitted for intensive care.

A doctor could override the tool's recommendation.

In another sign of the Tory-induced NHS crisis, some medicines used in intensive care units (ICU) are "in relatively short supply". One doctor said,

"These drugs are being rationed by the Department of Health and Social Care."

They said they had stock of just several days' worth of key medicines and could use other drugs, but it would mean patients "take significantly longer to wake".

"The normal ICU stay with pneumonia caused by flu is five days, but we're up to 15-20 days with Covid patients," they said.

"This means another patient cannot be admitted for lifesaving treatment. It's extremely worrying."